1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

the money weekly to his wives for petty market purchases and does all major purchases of food and clothing on his own. He also pays for ceremonies, transportation, and most of the gift-giving engaged in by himself and others in the household. Except for the sale of cooked food, pottery production, and female hair dressing, men control all income producing work of any kind in the entire society.

Households as Consumers

Almost all people in Bornu use, obtain, or eat the things they need because they are members of particular households or are related to a nearby household as a subordinate of its household head. The patterns of consumption vary enormously from that of a rural peasant to that of a wealthy trader or political leader in the city. However, the vast bulk of the population stays within a fairly uniform range that involves a relatively low level of consumption. Most families, especially those in rural areas, eat two meals a day; one between 8:00 and 9:00 A.M. and the other in the early evening between 8:00 and 9:00 P.M. Men of the compound and their male friends eat together while the women eat separately. Smaller snacks are eaten during the day, and in the city it is common to eat more often especially among salaried workers who return home for breakfast about 9:00 to 9:30 A.M. and finish the work day at 2:00 to 2:30 P.M. at which time they eat a noon-day meal. The average rural household consumes about eight pounds of millet (the staple grain food) every day, or about one and a half tons per year. The millet comes from farm products used by the household plus any buying that has to be done to augment this. For those few at the higher end of the social scale food bills can be enormous. One political leader in the capital claims that during his heyday he used to feed as many as seventy people a day and had to have a very smoothly-running household to get this much food processed and ready for his guests on a daily basis. In the ordinary peasant household men give their wives money on a weekly basis to purchase condiments for the staple food and sometimes meat as well although many of the richer men prefer to buy meat themselves. The money, usually anywhere from thirty cents to about $1.50 is given to the wife, or to each wife, or sometimes to the senior wife who then divides it among the co-wives.[1]

To an outsider Kanuri food seems almost infinitely expandable. I have often watched one bowl of food brought into the presence of a household head. He would glance around at the half dozen or so of us present and then ask us to join him, as he had to do by custom. On the other hand household heads have complained to me that they feed too many. "But what can we do?" they say, friends and would-be clients or subordinates know when food is to be brought, and they simply appear, at which point custom forces the host to be gracious. Those who eat continually at a friend's or a relative's house are in his debt and he may use their services as he wishes. This is one of the principal means by which clientship starts to operate. If the client eats with the patron, and the patron asks for services, and if both are satisfied, the relationship soon becomes an established one.

Clothing, like food, is in the hands of the household head although, and as

[1] Nigerian money is in pounds, shillings, and pence. I have translated values here at the rate of $2.80 American to £1 Nigerian.